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**Bridging the Gap in Social Services for Immigrants:  
A Community-Based Holistic Approach**

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## **RIIM**

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**Bridging the Gap in Social Services for Immigrants:  
A Community-Based Holistic Approach<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** This is a third in a series of paper on the history and development of SUCCESS – The United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society. The paper focuses on the programs and services provided by SUCCESS. Immigrant settlement and adaptation is still a prominent issue in Canada. We are still grappling with many important questions such as: How do new immigrants adapt to a society very different from their own? How do they navigate the complex paths that citizenship entails? Where do they go for assistance? What is the role of voluntary organizations concerning immigrants' settlement and adaptation? Drawing on the experience of SUCCESS in Vancouver, this study reveals that ethnic organizations, such as SUCCESS, can play a central role in helping immigrants with their settlement and adaptation in a new society by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services and advocacy. Its community-based holistic approach has been approved most effective because they are more closely connected with and responsive to ethnic community needs. As a transitional institution, it has acted as a stepping stone for immigrants to integrate into mainstream society and as a mediator between the individual immigrant and the state.

**Keywords:** immigration and integration, Chinese immigrants, immigrant service organizations

## **INTRODUCTION**

Immigration has played an important role in transforming Canada into an ethnoculturally diverse and economically prosperous nation. The 2001 Census of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003) reveals that as of May 15, 2001, 18.4% of Canada's total population were born outside the country, and that 13.4% identified themselves as visible minorities. Despite our rich history in immigration and the strategic role it plays in our future, the issue of immigrant settlement and adaptation is still prominent. We are still grappling with many important questions such as: How do new immigrants adapt to a society very different from their own, with a different language, culture, and tradition? How do they navigate the complex paths that citizenship (all the skills required) entails? In this regard, where do they go for assistance? In particular, where do they get the programs they need to upgrade their knowledge and skills as new citizens? What is the role of voluntary organizations concerning immigrants' settlement and adaptation? This study was designed to address such questions through investigating the role of an ethnic organization in bridging the gap in social services for Chinese immigrants in Vancouver. It examines the founding, historical development, programs and services, and social contributions of SUCCESS.

This article falls into six parts. The first examines the theoretical framework, followed by a review of the historical, social, and political context in which SUCCESS emerged. The third focuses on the research design. Fourth, it analyzes the historical development of the organization and the provision of programs and services. Fifth, it assesses the role of SUCCESS and, finally, it analyzes the social contributions of SUCCESS.

## **SOCIAL SERVICES FOR IMMIGRANTS: A REVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH**

This study is informed by a collage of literature pertaining to research on social services for immigrants, and the role of ethnic organizations in a welfare state.

### *Immigrant and Social Services*

When immigrants move to a new country, they need assistance in language, employment, housing, daycare, education, health care, counselling, legal, and social services. They may encounter many barriers in the process of adapting to a new society. A number of studies (Bergin 1988; Doyle & Visano 1987; Leung 2000; Ma 1996; Nguyen 1991; Reitz 1995) have identified one such barrier as lack of access to social services in the mainstream. Reitz (1995) reviewed nearly 400 publications from Canada, the US, Britain, and Australia on aspects of ethno-racial access, utilization, and delivery of social services. He concluded from this review that recent immigrants very often experience low

rates of utilization of many important social and health services, despite evidence of significant need and the fact that immigrants contribute more to the economy through taxation than they use in services. The barriers identified by many of these publications include those related to language, lack of information about services, cultural patterns of help seeking, lack of cultural sensitivity by service providers, financial barriers, and lack of service availability. Furthermore, more recent research (Guo 2005; Leung 2000; Ma 1996) reported that employment barriers, such as devaluation of foreign credentials and work experience, were another challenge facing immigrants.

While many commentators view barriers to social services as cultural and linguistic issues, others see it from the perspective of racism. Henry et al. (2005) attribute the persistence of racial inequality in social services to the existing ideologies of democratic racism and universalism. While Canadians were committed to democratic principles such as justice, equality, and fairness, people still retain their negative attitudes and behaviours towards minority groups or any differential treatment which is aimed at ameliorating the low status of these groups. The ideology in which these two sets of conflicting values coexist with each other is referred to by Henry et al. as “democratic racism.” They also argue that failure to provide immigrants with accessible services can also be attributed to the liberal universalism which assumes that people are all the same and, therefore, require similar modes of service and intervention.

All major studies reviewed here found that traditional mainstream social service organizations were not responding adequately to the needs expressed by members of minority ethnic groups and the barriers they faced. Although some mainstream agencies have attempted to provide more accessible and equitable services by introducing a multicultural organizational model, the change often appears to be “cosmetic” rather than substantive because “the needs and interest of minorities are dealt with on an ad hoc basis rather than being integrated into the structure, policies, programs, and practices of the organization” (Henry et al. 2005, p.224). As an alternative, ethno-racial organizations have undertaken the responsibility of providing more effective, responsive, and equitable services to minority communities.

#### *The Role of Ethnic Organizations and the State*

In recent years a number of studies have been conducted pertaining to the role of ethnic organizations in a welfare state. Moodley (1983) argues that, with the rise of the welfare state in the 1960s, ethnic associations dealing with individual adjustment and advancement of immigrants were likely to become less important. The function of these associations, she argues, will be largely assumed by a host of state-directed social agencies. Since financial and moral support was made

available by the state to help immigrants whenever they needed it, immigrants would no longer rely so heavily on cultural self-help organizations for initial survival, except a handful of lower income and older individuals. Moodley made an interesting observation here, but a number of studies have shown that this statement was premature. On the contrary, ethnic organizations are playing an important role in providing accessible and ethnic-sensitive services to help immigrants settle in and adapt to their new environments. The experience of the Jewish community of Montreal has provided a good example (Weinfeld 2000).

One of these works that challenges the prediction of early demise of ethnic organizations was Jenkins's (1988)'s volume, which examines the role of ethnic organizations in five countries: Australia, Israel, the Netherlands, USA, and UK. It concludes that ethnic organizations vary from those that are well organized and offer a broad spectrum of professional services, to those less organized offering hardly any services. On the whole, they act as social service providers, maintain ethnic identities, and promote integration. In addition, they function as the "link" or "broker" between newcomers and the formal service providers. In some circumstances they may "provide the only decent or nearly decent help available to some minority groups" (Cheetham 1988, p.147). To some people, they are the "best-kept secret in social work" (Jenkins 1988, p.275).

The comparative studies also reveal national differences among the five countries. In Australia, Israel, and the USA, new immigrants were sought as part of a national policy to populate the countries and increase their labour supply. Therefore, ethnic associations for immigrants in these countries received formal approval, and were incorporated into the network of community supports. They were "simultaneously bureaucratized and non-bureaucratized" (Korazim 1988, p.1545). Ethnic associations in the Netherlands and UK appeared to be less effective as linkages in social service delivery. For ethnic associations in the Netherlands, functions were actually applicable and those wished for by the receiving society may clash. In the British case, it may be because the position of diversity represented by the associations seemed to be antithetical to the presumed national ideology of a homogeneous state. Despite the the national differences, ethnic organizations across the borders share common challenges. They are usually "low on resources, understaffed," and "function from inadequate premises" (Casey 1988, p.262). The short-term nature of the funding resulted in "insecurity" and "inflexibility" which greatly restricted service development.

Besides providing social services, immigrant service organizations can play an active advocacy role politically in combating and eliminating all forms of racism in the areas of social services. Canadian authors such as Beyene et al. (1996) argue that the denial of access to culturally

appropriate programs and services is a manifestation of racism faced by immigrants during their settlement and adaptation process. More and more immigrants and refugees have increasingly turned to immigrant service agencies for help. Besides providing anti-racist, culturally and linguistically appropriate services, they were also involved in community education and development, and advocated for changes in the policies that perpetuate discrimination and racism. The authors conclude that "It is this combination of settlement services and advocacy, the result of which is anti-racist community development" (p.173).

Unlike Beyene et al., Ng (1996) is not so optimistic about the roles that ethnic organizations were playing, especially its advocacy roles. Rather, she paints a grim picture of the state funded community services. Her book, *The Politics of Community Services*, examines the experiences of immigrant women in a voluntary, non-profit organization which provided job counselling and placement services for non-English speaking women. She contends that ethnic organizations function as an extension of the coordinated activities of the state. Through funding requirements and accountability procedures, the state exercises a form of social control. It becomes an alternative way for the state to dissipate potential dissension and maintain class domination. Therefore, the initial advocacy impetus for the agency was blunted.

Holder (1998), another Canadian researcher, introduces another perspective on the roles of immigrant service agencies and its relationship with the welfare state. She argues that conflictual relations between government and voluntary organizations may not necessarily be the order of the day. In examining the role of the Portuguese and Spanish Speaking Women's Centre in the Canadian welfare state, Holder contends that immigrant service agencies are both actors and policy beneficiaries. She states that ethnic organizations and the state share the same goal, working together to serve immigrants. Their relationship may in fact be one of mutual dependence.

## **HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL CONTEXT**

The Chinese immigrant group is one of the oldest in Canada, and its history is probably the most unsettling (Li 1998). The first group of Chinese arrived in Victoria on June 28, 1858, from California in search of gold and new development opportunities. Originally they came predominantly from the southern Chinese coastal provinces of Guangdong (or Kuangtung) and Fujian (or Fukien). Most of them were single men with rural origins. As the gold fields petered out, the Chinese found employment as domestic servants, coal miners, and seasonal workers in the salmon canning industry (Tan & Roy 1985). Chinese workers were used extensively during the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR).

The proliferation of the Chinese on the West Coast was perceived as a threat to the mission of the government to build a white British Columbia. The Chinese signified an ancient and medieval baggage of distinctions between "West" and "East," civilized and barbarian, master and slave, Christian and heathen, white and non-white (Anderson 1995). With the completion of the CPR, the Chinese were no longer welcome. In 1885, the government of Canada imposed a \$50 head tax on all incoming Chinese, increased to \$100 in 1900, and to \$500 in 1903. When it was found that it was not effective enough to keep the Chinese out of Canada, the Federal Government passed a restrictive Chinese Immigration Act in 1923, which virtually prohibited all Chinese immigration into Canada until its repeal in 1947. Besides the head tax and the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, the Chinese also faced other kinds of discrimination. Since they were not allowed to vote, they were prohibited from entering certain professions such as law, medicine, or accounting. Further, they were denied the opportunity to acquire Crown land (Tan & Roy 1985).

The founding and historical development of SUCCESS mirrored, and was influenced by, the national immigration policy. From Confederation to the 1960s, the selection of immigrants was based on racial background, with the British and Western Europeans being the most "desirable" citizens, the Asians the "unassimilable" and, therefore, "undesirable." After the Second World War, Canadian immigration policy continued to be "highly restrictive" (Knowles 1997) despite external and internal pressures for an open-door policy.

In the mid-1960s, Canada was experiencing "the greatest postwar boom" (Whitaker 1991, p.18). Skilled labour was required to help Canada build its expansionary economy, but Europe as the traditional source of immigrants was not able to meet the needs of Canada because of the economic recovery there. Thus, the Canadian government turned its recruitment efforts to the traditionally restricted areas -- Asia. In 1967 a "point system" was introduced by the Liberal government, which based the selection of immigrants on their "education, skills and resources" rather than their racial and religious backgrounds (Ibid., p.19). According to Whitaker, this new system represented "an historic watershed," and "it did establish at the level of formal principle that Canadian immigration policy is 'colour blind'" (Ibid., p.19). Whitaker pointed out further that the "point system" was successful in reversing the pattern of immigration to Canada away from Europe toward Asia and other Third World countries. By the mid-1970s there were more immigrants arriving from the Third World than from the developed world, the largest number coming from Asia, followed by the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa (Ibid., p.19). Among the Asian group, many were from Hong Kong.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The central guiding question for this research was: How did a community-initiated voluntary organization such as SUCCESS respond to changing needs of an ethnic community in a multicultural society? Two major qualitative research methods were used to conduct this study: document analysis and personal interviewing. The selection of research methods derived from the nature of this research as an interpretive study, and its attempts to understand people's lived experience with the organization. The document analysis included SUCCESS annual reports, newsletters, AGM meeting minutes, important speeches, and program brochures. Twenty interviews were conducted with the Executive, Board members, and Program Directors. Time and space did not permit interviews with clientele, so their views of this organization were not represented here. In addition to the two major methods, site visiting and participant observation as a volunteer were used as complementary methods to help me contextualize what was read and heard about the organization. Multiple data sources and methods indicated that this study adopted a triangulation approach which ensured the credibility of the research.

For the analysis of the research, a four-stage process was developed: (i) identifying main points, (ii) searching for salient themes and recurring patterns, (iii) grouping common themes and patterns into related categories, and (iv) comparing all major categories with reference to the major theories in the field to form new perspectives. The four-stage process assured that there was frequent interplay between the data and theory.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### *The Founding of SUCCESS*

Among the Chinese immigrants who arrived in the 1960s, many did not speak good English when they came. In particular, with the group who came under the family reunion category, many of them arrived in Vancouver with little or no English at all. Owing to language difficulties and cultural barriers, many people had problems accessing mainstream social service agencies for assistance. Thus, a gap was found between the mainstream society and the Chinese community and actions were required to address this gap. In her interview, Maggie Ip, the founding Chair of SUCCESS, explains:

We found the gap. There was no bridge. There were always these two isolated groups of people and the gap was in between. The gap was really the cultural and language barriers.

In 1973, SUCCESS was founded out of this context in response to the failure of government agencies and mainstream organizations to provide accessible social services for newly arrived Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong. Discussions with the early founders of SUCCESS and analysis of SUCCESS documents reveal five purposes for the founding of SUCCESS: (i) to bridge the gap in social services between new Chinese immigrants and service agencies, (ii) to act as a united voice in the Chinese Community, (iii) to educate Chinese immigrants about their rights and responsibilities, (iv) to help immigrants become independent and productive citizens, and (v) to promote integration.

### *A Brief History of SUCCESS*

The development of SUCCESS can be summarized in three stages. Stage One, from 1973-1979, saw the establishment of the Chinese Connection Project, a demonstration project funded by Health and Welfare Canada to bridge the ‘gap’ between social service agencies and the needs of newly-arrived Chinese immigrants primarily from Hong Kong. During this stage, the organization mainly provided basic settlement services and language assistance. Specific services include, for example, ESL classes and information on Canada’s education and health care system. This project also involved making direct referrals of immigrants to other service providers and providing translation services to help them navigate unfamiliar bureaucracies and organizations.

Stage Two, from 1979-1989, was a developing and maturing stage during which there was a large increase in Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong due to the Sino-British Agreement on the future of Hong Kong. This increased demand led to substantial increases both in the volume of services and budget. Another change that occurred during this period was that immigrants were settling in a broader geographic area beyond the Chinatown area (located in downtown Vancouver) and this led to establishing two branch offices outside Chinatown. During this maturing stage SUCCESS won a number of awards from the Chinese community and mainstream organizations in recognition of its contributions to community development. Another noteworthy development during this period was a growing advocacy role in response to instances of discrimination in national and local media. Two major racist incidents occurred when the Chinese were slighted in the media. In the first incident, a national TV news magazine erroneously portrayed second and third-generation Canadian citizens of Chinese descent as foreign students taking educational opportunities away from white Canadians at taxpayers’ expense. In the second, CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) Radio broadcast the “Dim Sum Diaries,” which satirized the accents of new Chinese immigrants and stereotypes of their behaviour. SUCCESS participated in a national campaign against the first and led a protest against the second resulting in apologies and withdrawal of programs.

Stage Three, from 1989-1998, was characterized by expansion and transformation. By the time the Society reached its 25th anniversary, SUCCESS had evolved from a basic settlement agency to an influential organization with eight branch offices throughout Greater Vancouver. During this period, the make-up of the immigrant population shifted with increasing numbers coming from other regions including Taiwan and Mainland China. The lead up to the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, produced a substantial influx of immigrants from Hong Kong. The changing composition of immigrants required SUCCESS to alter its program offerings to include, for example, more programs suited to professional and business immigrants and the growing numbers of Mandarin speaking immigrants.

From this brief summary, it can be seen that SUCCESS was constantly responding to changing needs and to the gaps left by government and mainstream organizations who were not developing programs for this group. The next section will examine more closely programs and services at SUCCESS.

### *Programs and Services*

By the time it celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1998, SUCCESS had become a well-established multi-level service agency providing a wide range of programs and services to both Chinese and non-Chinese immigrants. These included immigrant airport reception, settlement services, language training, employment training and services, small business development and training, counselling services, and group and community services. The analysis of programs and services focuses on many aspects, including the purposes of the programs, the scope of services, major events and achievements, clientele, funding, social contributions, and issues. Since each area or office has its own uniqueness, the discussion will allow variations.

### **Community Airport Newcomers Network (CANN)**

The Community Airport Newcomers Network (CANN) was set up in 1992 to help newly arrived immigrants with their landing procedures and pre-settlement through the provision of welcome reception, resource orientation, and referral services right from the moment when immigrants arrived at the Vancouver airport. SUCCESS was contracted by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to provide this program. Francis Chan, Program Director of CANN explained how this works:

What we do at the airport is to give some orientation to all the landing immigrants, help them through the landing procedures with the Immigration Department and the Customs, and give them all

the necessary information that they need for their settlement. We also refer them to some immigrant service agencies once they get out of the airport. The purpose for setting up this program was to help new immigrants with the landing procedures, and provide information and referral services to them upon landing.

Since 1997 CANN was also mandated to receive government or privately sponsored refugees. Similar to assisting landing immigrants, CANN staff would help refugees go through the landing procedures. Unlike receiving regular landing immigrants, which they would target as many as possible during their regular hours, they had to receive all refugees arriving at the Vancouver Airport. Hence, the operating hours for this part of the service had to be flexible.

CANN has a multilingual team comprising ten staff members. The orientation was usually conducted first in English, and then followed by another language that most of the immigrants of that particular group spoke. CANN worked with ten immigrant service agencies in Greater Vancouver. According to Chan, they made referral to which organization they should be visiting afterwards based on two criteria: where they live and what language they speak.

Chan stressed that it is important to provide immigrants and refugees with proper information at the earliest time possible to help them with the settlement process. Being a well-established social and immigrant service agency, it was natural for SUCCESS to be part of this program. In a 1995 survey CANN conducted, many immigrants who received their services found that it was useful to have people who spoke their own languages greet them and help them go through the landing procedures and get necessary settlement information upon arrival.

#### Language Training and Settlement Services

Among all programs and services, Language Training and Settlement Services have always been at the centre of SUCCESS. The division provided direct information and referral services, workshops, new immigrant orientation, language training, citizenship classes, and Mandarin services. It also organized special support groups to help recent independent immigrants. As the core of settlement services, direct information and referral services are provided by five branch offices of SUCCESS. There were drop-in as well as phone-in services. Ansar Cheung, Program Director of Language Training and Settlement Services, coordinates all the settlement services at SUCCESS. She explained that direct information and referral services are the first step toward achieving integration for immigrants. She stated:

People come with different kinds of questions. They ask anything about immigration, about medical services plan, about the social benefits, about education, about

customs, citizenship, anything. That's why our staff members have to be equipped with a lot of information. Settlement staff is like a walking dictionary... If we don't know the answer, we will try to liaise with other organizations or make a right referral to other organizations.

This division also organized workshops once or twice a month. For newly arrived immigrants, they held orientations weekly. Both workshops and orientation classes could cover a wide range of topics from public transit to education. Cheung also mentioned that they tried to use immigrants' native languages where possible at new immigrant orientations. All their staff members were required to be fluent in both English and at least another language.

Language Training and Settlement Services offered two kinds of language training programs. LINC, or Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada, was sponsored by the government. With the devolution of funding from the federal government to the province, now it is under the management of MRMI - Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Immigration. MRMI renamed LINC as the Language Training Program for Adults. SUCCESS offered 28 government-sponsored classes in 7 locations.

The second kind of language training program was on fee charging for those who are not eligible for government funded programs, and for those who wish to continue improving their English after they have taken the government-sponsored program. Cheung commented:

Besides the government-sponsored language training, we also have fee-charging programs, because there are people who may not be eligible for the government-funded programs. Also for language training, the government funded one has up to 3 levels. Post LINC, they can't go on, they will have to look for some fee charging programs. We do have fee-charging programs from literacy to intermediate levels, and we also try to develop more workplace English as more people are looking for jobs. There is a need for people to learn more about workplace English, and also the language that can help them enhance their relationship with their colleagues.

The Division of Language Training and Settlement Service also coordinated the Mandarin Service Centre. With an increasing number of Mandarin speaking immigrants moving to Vancouver from Taiwan and mainland China since late 1980s, SUCCESS acted with two positive responses: i) hiring Mandarin-speaking staff members in different locations, and ii) establishing a Mandarin service centre. Cheung stated:

About five years ago, an increasing number of immigrants speak Mandarin. They are from Taiwan, and recently also from Mainland China. We feel there is a need to set up a Mandarin service centre, and this centre is more like a settlement program, and that's why I am also in charge of the centre. Mandarin service centre basically runs similar programs, except all the staff's native language is Mandarin.

According to Cheung, one major issue facing this Division as well as the whole organization was lack of secure funding which prohibited them from making long-term plans and implementing successful programs. Cheung also added that lack of funding and the nature of short-term funding caused tremendous instability and frustrations among staff members. SUCCESS was working with a number of community organizations to push for more stable, long-term funding, preferably at least for three years. Cheung said:

We try to pressure the government for more long-term funding. I feel really tired. Year after year, we have to apply for funding and negotiate contract with our funders. We feel that if there can be at least 3 years funding, we can secure the funding and plan our programs better. After you plan a program, even if you have implemented a new program, it runs so well after a year, because there is no funding, you cannot continue the program, you have to stop the program right away. What happens to the clients? Who is going to suffer? It is the clients who suffer. Long term planning is more useful. I heard the government is trying to see if there can be long term funding or not.

### **SUCCESS Employment Training and Services**

Finding a job is an important part of immigrants' settlement and integration process. The SUCCESS Employment Training and Services was originally set up in the mid-1980s to assist immigrants to find jobs and settle in Canada. Its programs included helping immigrants upgrade their English, learn job searching skills, and prepare for resumes and job interviews. Thomas Yeung, Program Director of this division, commented:

SUCCESS is committed to help new immigrants to settle here in Vancouver. Without getting a job we won't be able to help immigrants to settle here in Canada. Our services start off by helping clients to upgrade their English, and then help them to find a job. A lot of clients do not know how to prepare for their resume and how to perform in a job interview. Our employment services start in that particular area, so job searching skills, English upgrading, resume writing are our initial services in the old days.

Since then, the program has gone through several stages of development. According to Yeung, when resource-based industries were closing down in British Columbia, the focus was shifted to skills training in order to equip people with specific skills to find other jobs. In more recent years, employment training had moved away from specific skills training to learning broader skills in order to prepare people with flexible skills for the rest of their lives. Another change was the devolution of federal responsibilities to the provincial government. With the restructuring of government funding policies, funding of its programs became provincial responsibilities since July 1999. Yet, the most

challenging shift involves government fee charging policies. Yeung noted that employment training programs used to be free based on the needs of individuals. Now people had to pay. In addition, they have to open up their programs to non-immigrants. Without any doubt, this change had great impact on the programs and services at SUCCESS. Yeung pointed out that they had to make adjustment accordingly.

[...]and now they are again changing to another mode emphasizing on fee for service, asking clients to contribute as well... Because training services are very costly, I don't believe that SUCCESS or even any community organizations can do it all by itself. What we have to do is to adapt to their funding criteria, but on top of what they expect us to do, we put in our own philosophy to make it work. We get the money complying with their requirement, but at the same time we are using all the resources to help realizing our organizational objectives as well.

From its past experience, SUCCESS Employment Training and Services has developed its own approach. The holistic approach was a collaborative endeavour with other sections of SUCCESS services, such as language training and counselling. It also involved people from outside SUCCESS, such as business partners and government agencies. This approach gained lots of recognition across Canada by people in the field. Yeung commented:

As I point out, this is my philosophy and belief that employment is not an isolated issue. Integration, adaptation, settlement are holistic. You can't just accomplish one particular area of adaptation. Adaptation is total adaptation. You learn the language, you find yourself a house, you put your kids in school. But at the same time, you have to find yourself a job. Any breakdown of this system will be affecting your family. This is a system theory, every system and every part has to work together... Everything is inter-related. That is why SUCCESS has been so successful [in promoting integration] because SUCCESS is an organization providing a wide range of services rather than just one particular sector of service.

The Employment Training and Services has grown into the largest among all SUCCESS programs. It has also become the driving force behind SUCCESS's growth and expansion in the past few years. According to Yeung, this division employed about 100 people (including contract staff) in seven branch offices. Recently SUCCESS consolidated employment related training programs and services under the umbrella of SUCCESS Training Institute. It included three major groups of training services: language training, employment services, and small business development. Yeung argued that the impact of this consolidation on the operation of its programs was immense and positive. He maintained that universities and community colleges were not successful in accommodating minority students. He saw the gap there. Yeung predicted the future of the SUCCESS Training Institute to be a community college for immigrant students.

### **Small Business Development and Training**

In the 1980s, the Canadian government introduced the “business immigrant” category, which consisted of self-employed, entrepreneurs, and investors. This program attracted immigrants predominantly from Asia and the Middle East. By 1986, 40% of all business immigrants came from Hong Kong (Whitaker 1991). In response to the needs of proliferating business immigrants, SUCCESS launched its Small Business Development and Training in 1995. It offered three major programs and services, including information and referral services for immigrants who were interested in setting up their own business, business venture with corporations (such as IBM Canada, Royal Bank), and the Youth Entrepreneurial Development Program. While the first two were primarily for recent immigrants, the last program was for everyone, both immigrants and non-immigrants. The Youth Entrepreneurial Development Program started in 1996 with sponsorship from Human Resource Development of Canada. It was for people within the age of eighteen to thirty, free of charge. There were two intakes every year and 16 participants per intake. The program was full time study lasting for four months. Thomas Tam, Program Director of Small Business Development and Training, told me that the Youth Entrepreneurial Development Program was assessed as one of the three best practices in Canada. He explained:

We have a couple of initiatives which got good community response, very positive feedback. One is our Youth Entrepreneurial Development Program... Last year a team of consultants hired by the federal government studied our program and gave us very good feedback. As a consequence our program was chosen as one of the four successful stories for national media production by HRDC. It was broadcast early this year... Recently at a national conference on entrepreneurship training and support, our program was awarded as one of the three best practices in Canada.

The objective of these programs was to help participants become self-sufficient through setting up their own businesses. The long-term benefits of these programs were to help immigrants with their economic integration. When I asked Tam whether small business training was in contradiction with SUCCESS’s original mandate to help immigrants overcome language and cultural barriers, he explained that expanding its programs and services to small business training was regarded as an extension of SUCCESS's original mandate, not a contradiction. He noted:

I would like to say it was an extension of our service base on the same mandate. For new immigrants, we also help them to overcome cultural and language barriers in doing businesses or in getting employment. For the Canadian community at large, we help to bridge newcomers and local people, and eventually for the well being of everybody. I think this is an extension of our services based on the old mandate.

### **Family and Youth Counselling**

Family and Youth Counselling first started in early 1980s as a family program and later expanded to include counselling services. Starting from the 1990s, they began to offer such services in its branch offices. Its programs and services served two major purposes: help immigrants with family and relational issues and advocate on behalf of immigrant in the areas of family services. Family and youth counselling was the core program of this division. They handled around 600 cases per year. They also provided public education through workshops, library resources, and the media. Recently they produced 13 episodes of family life education series in collaboration with a local TV station. Frequently they were in partnerships with schools to bridge the gap between students, parents, and the school. They adopted an effective and innovative approach to provide group programs, using theatrical techniques. According to Kelly Ng, Program Director of Family and Youth Counselling, immigrant families usually needed support in the following three areas: marital issues, parent-child relationships, and family violence, such as spousal assault and child abuse.

All these issues are beyond the scope of settlement, but they can hamper or slow down immigrants' integration process. Ng believed SUCCESS could play an important role in providing culturally and linguistically appropriate professional family and counselling services. He noted that all of his 14 staff members were bilingual in English and Cantonese or Mandarin Chinese because of the significance of providing counselling in the clients' native languages. He particularly stressed the importance of providing counseling in clients' native language. Ng stated:

It is always a philosophical debate whether we should have a multicultural organization or a mainstream organization hiring just one person. I think they should co-exist... I don't know about all other field, but in family services, ethno-cultural mode is definitely important because we are talking about emotion. When the clients come to the services, they feel frustrated. If they can't express themselves in their own languages, they find that person doesn't understand their culture, how can they do family counselling?

The funding for Family and Youth Counselling programs was not stable. It kept changing every year. Frequently they had to find new sponsorship. In most recent years their programs were sponsored by the municipal and provincial governments. Ng shared the same frustration with Ansar Cheung in terms of shortage of funding. He also expressed other issues facing the organization, which included overwork, lack of job security, and low pay. Ng explained:

One of the things is the situation of burn-out. People are overworked. We can't help the situation. Everybody is using their commitment. The need is huge and we are under pressure to fulfill. The other is unstable working environment. They are not

sure when they will be without a job. The other one is salary. We are below market price, comparing to the major therapy organizations. We are about 1/3 below them.

### **Group and Community Services**

Group and Community Services focuses on advocacy, community development, and public education. It looked after a wide range of programs, including senior's programs, women's programs, and civic education. They do community outreach, reaching out to neighbourhood houses and community centres to promote immigrants' access to their services. Over the past years, SUCCESS has built partnerships with 150 mainstream organizations, such as hospitals, health boards, police, school boards, and the media.

Liaising with the mainstream and Chinese media was another important responsibility of this Division. This included working with 4 Chinese newspapers (Singtao, Ming Pao, China Journal, and World Journal), 3 radio stations (1320, FM96.1 and AM1470), and 2 TV stations (Fairchild TV and City Television). This division also organized many events (such as the Chinese New Year celebration and the Mid-Autumn Festival) in collaboration with other organizations within the Chinese community, including clan organizations, the Chinese Cultural Centre, the Chinese Benevolent Association, and the Chinese Merchants' Association.

In addition, Group and Community Services was also responsible for promoting volunteer and membership programs. Volunteers helped SUCCESS with its daily operation and different tasks in various areas. In the 1980s, most of the volunteers mainly involved in the interpretation services. They also contributed to helping Vietnamese refugees settle in Vancouver. The number of volunteers had increased from 150 in 1980 to over 7,000 in 1998. Shirley Leung, Program Director of Group and Community Services, called volunteers the backbone of SUCCESS. She maintained that, without the help of volunteers, SUCCESS could not survive.

Without volunteers, we cannot survive. Around our 12 branches, including part time staff and instructors, we have 200 people. But in terms of volunteers, we have 7,000. You can see why we need 7,000 people because we are totally manpower. Like us, we only have 4 full time staff, but we have 300 dedicated volunteers who come everyday. Without them, we cannot survive.

By 1998, SUCCESS had a membership of 16,000 people. According to Leung, 90% of their members were their clients. In terms of reasons for becoming members, Leung maintained that it was likely their appreciation of SUCCESS services which made them decide to join the Society. Talking about the significance of having such a large membership, Leung argued that membership meant sources of community leaders, income, and information for SUCCESS. She explained:

Board members come from membership. Members are actually our boss. Members are our resources. Ten dollars in a way is a big deal, ten times 16,000 is a lot. Through members we knew their needs and trends, and recruited many volunteers. Like women's groups, senior groups, they are members.

## **DISCUSSION: ASSESSING THE MODEL OF SUCCESS**

### *The Secret of the SUCCESS Model: A Community-Based Holistic Approach*

This study reveals that SUCCESS experienced tremendous changes between 1973 and 1998. The fiscal growth of SUCCESS during its first 25 years was most evident. Other important changes were seen in its programs and services and community development. Many people herald the experience of SUCCESS as a successful story. The question is: What made SUCCESS so successful? The current study reveals that many social forces have contributed to the success of SUCCESS. First, SUCCESS was successful in responding to the changing needs of immigrants. The profile of recent immigrants changed owing to changes in Canadian immigration policies, such as the adoption of the “point system,” the introduction of the business immigrant category, and the opening of the immigration division in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing. One consequence of the most recent policy change was the increase of professional and business immigrants, especially those from Taiwan and China. The needs of newly-arrived immigrants differed from their early counterparts and SUCCESS responded to meet these changing needs.

Second, SUCCESS has built a strong community support network. The size of the organization with a large membership of 17,000 and a huge volunteer base of 7,000 showed the strength of the organization. When these numbers were converted into political and economic resources, its voice cannot be ignored by politicians and policymakers. Furthermore, from its past experience SUCCESS developed an innovative approach that treats settlement, adaptation, and integration as a holistic process which requires integrated services, including settlement, language training, employment programs, counseling, business training, and community development. All these services are inter-related. Only by providing integrated services can enhance the holistic integration of immigrants.

### *Multiple Roles with a Three-Pronged Focus*

In terms of the roles of SUCCESS, the findings of this study reflected many of those reported by Jenkins (1988). These include providing direct and information referral services, advocating on behalf of immigrants, filling gaps in existing programs, promoting integration, bridging ethnic

Chinese community and mainstream society, facilitating community education and development, acting as a linkage between new immigrants and the formal service providers, playing the role of language and cultural broker, providing resources and a support network, and maintaining ethnic and cultural identity. These roles served both instrumental and expressive needs of immigrants. But its most important roles were providing professional services, advocating on behalf of immigrants, and facilitating community education and development. The study demonstrates that SUCCESS accomplished the effective combination of these three roles.

This study supports Beyene et al.'s (1996) proposition that an immigrant service organization can be a "combination of settlement services and advocacy" (p.173). The study further reveals that SUCCESS functioned as a special mechanism between formal public bureaucracies and primary social networks. Like the ethnic organizations in Israel, it was "simultaneously bureaucratized and non-bureaucratized" (Korazim 1988, p.155). Providing professional services did not necessarily conflict with its roles in advocacy, community education and development. Because of the organization's strong community base and frontline experiences, its advocacy work reflected deeper community roots and was more effective than voices from pure advocacy groups.

#### *SUCCESS and the State*

This study has demonstrated that the relationship between SUCCESS and the state is like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, government funding made it possible for SUCCESS to provide more services to help immigrants with their settlement and adaptation, and consequently contributed to the establishment of SUCCESS as a highly respectable voluntary immigrant service and advocacy group. At the same time, through the funding process the government was able to legitimize its policies and carry out its own agenda. Without any doubt, SUCCESS provided an entrance for the government to access a hard-to-reach ethnic community, and through which to approach immigrants. Since SUCCESS has also taken on some of the functions which used to be assumed by the state, gradually it was playing a more important role in the provision of social services as well as in the development of civil society. SUCCESS became "a cheaper alternative to direct service provision" (Ng 1996, p.11) and a means for the state to reduce its deficit.

Since SUCCESS needed the funding to benefit its group members, it appears that the organization was able to overcome the negative part of the double-edged sword effects. Because a large proportion of SUCCESS's budget came from its fundraising from the community, this made SUCCESS less dependent on government funding and maintained its autonomy. This explained why

SUCCESS was able simultaneously to continue and expand its partnerships with the government while successfully advocating for social change.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study challenges the prediction of early demise of ethnic organizations. On the contrary, it testifies that ethnic organizations can play a central role in helping immigrants with their settlement and adaptation in a new society by providing culturally- and linguistically-appropriate services and advocacy. It is evident that an area that the organization has had a great impact on was the Chinese community itself. Chinese immigrants benefited immensely from its programs and services. This study reveals that SUCCESS has increased the access of Chinese immigrants to settlement and other social services, which they were entitled to but deprived of, owing to the failure of the state and mainstream social service agencies. SUCCESS acted as a mediator between the individual immigrants and the state. It provided a means to investigate the dynamic between individual immigrants' agency and the structural or institutional constraints they face in exercising that agency. As a transitional institution, it has helped immigrants ease the process of settlement, adaptation, and integration. To many immigrants, SUCCESS was a stepping stone for them to integrate into mainstream society. Meanwhile, it is also an important entrance for government agencies and mainstream organizations to approach a hard-to-reach ethnic community. The experience of SUCCESS has shown that ethno-racial organizations could be a more effective alternative other than mainstream organizations, because they are more closely connected with and responsive to ethnic community needs.

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